

John Taylor Gatto Quotes (Author of *Dumbing Us Down*)

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John
Taylor
Gatto

"I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my thirty years of teaching: schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes anymore that scientists are trained in science classes or politicians in civics classes or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don't really teach anything except how to obey orders. This is a great mystery to me because thousands of humane, caring people work in schools as teachers and aides and administrators, but the abstract logic of the institution overwhelms their individual contributions. Although teachers do care and do work very, very hard, the institution is psychopathic -- it has no conscience. It rings a bell and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell where he must memorize that humans and monkeys derive from a common ancestor."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"Children learn what they live. Put kids in a class and they will live out their lives in an invisible cage, isolated from their chance at community; interrupt kids with bells and horns all the time and they will learn that nothing is important or worth finishing; ridicule them and they will retreat from human association; shame them and they will find a hundred ways to get even. The habits taught in large-scale organizations are deadly."

— John Taylor Gatto

"What's gotten in the way of education in the United States is a theory of social engineering that says there is ONE RIGHT WAY to proceed with growing up."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

"Shouldn't we also ask ourselves what the consequences are of scrambling to provide the "most" of everything to our children in a world of fast dwindling resources? "

— John Taylor Gatto

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"I've concluded that genius is as common as dirt. We suppress genius because we haven't yet figured out how to manage a population of educated men and women. The solution, I think, is simple and glorious. Let them manage themselves."

— John Taylor Gatto, *Weapons of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling*

"The primary goal of real education is not to deliver facts but to guide students to the truths that will allow them to take responsibility for their lives."

— John Taylor Gatto, *A Different Kind of Teacher: Solving the Crisis of American Schooling*

"I don't think we'll get rid of schools any time soon, certainly not in my lifetime, but if we're going to change what's rapidly becoming a disaster of ignorance, we need to realize that the institution "schools" very well, but it does not "educate"; that's inherent in the design of the thing. It's not the fault of bad teachers or too little money spent. It's just impossible for education and schooling to be the same thing."

— John Taylor Gatto

"The obligation to amuse and instruct myself was entirely my own, and people who didn't know that were childish people, to be avoided if possible. Certainly not to be trusted."

— John Taylor Gatto

"Independent study, community service, adventures and experience, large doses of privacy and solitude, a

thousand different apprenticeships — the one-day variety or longer — these are all powerful, cheap, and effective ways to start a real reform of schooling. But no large-scale reform is ever going to work to repair our damaged children and our damaged society until we force open the idea of “school” to include family as the main engine of education. If we use schooling to break children away from parents — and make no mistake, that has been the central function of schools since John Cotton announced it as the purpose of the Bay Colony schools in 1650 and Horace Mann announced it as the purpose of Massachusetts schools in 1850 — we’re going to continue to have the horror show we have right now.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“Individuality, family, and community are, by definition, expressions of singular organization, never of “one-right-way” thinking on the grand scale. Children and families need some relief from government surveillance and intimidation if original expressions belonging to THEM are to develop. Without these freedom has no meaning.”

— John Taylor Gatto

“This was once a land where every sane person knew how to build a shelter, grow food, and entertain one another. Now we have been rendered permanent children. It’s the architects of forced schooling who are responsible for that.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“Children allowed to take responsibility and given a serious part in the larger world are always superior to those merely permitted to play and be passive.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

“The home-schooling movement has quietly grown to a size where one and half million young people are being educated entirely by their own parents; last month the education press reported the amazing news that, in their ability to think, children schooled at home seem to be five or even ten years ahead of their formally trained peers.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“School is a twelve-year jail sentence where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned. I teach school and win awards doing it. I should know.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“Pick up a fifth-grade math or rhetoric textbook from 1850 and you’ll see that the texts were pitched then on what would today be considered college level. The continuing cry for “basic skills” practice is a smoke screen”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“Our form of compulsory schooling is an invention of the State of Massachusetts around 1850. It was resisted — sometimes with guns — by an estimated eighty percent of the Massachusetts population, the last outpost in Barnstable on Cape Cod not surrendering its children until the 1880s, when the area was seized by militia and children marched to school under guard.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“Work in classrooms isn’t significant work; it fails to satisfy real needs pressing on the individual; it doesn’t answer real questions experience raises in the young mind; it doesn’t contribute to solving any problem encountered in actual life. The net effect of making all schoolwork external to individual longings, experiences, questions, and problems is to render the victim listless.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

“It is time that we squarely face the fact that institutional schoolteaching is destructive to children.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“The lesson of report cards, grades, and tests is that children should not trust themselves or their parents but should instead rely on the evaluation of certified officials. People need to be told what they are worth.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“• As society rapidly changes, individuals will have to be able to function comfortably in a world that is always in flux. Knowledge will continue to increase at a dizzying rate. This means that a content-based curriculum, with a set body of information to be imparted to students, is entirely inappropriate as a means of preparing children for their adult roles.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*

“School is about learning to wait your turn, however long it takes to come, if ever. And how to submit with a show of enthusiasm to the judgment of strangers, even if they are wrong, even if your enthusiasm is phony.”

— John Taylor Gatto

“As a writer, politician, scientist, and businessman, [Ben] Franklin had few equals among the educated of his day—though he left school at ten. (...)”

Boys like Andrew Carnegie who begged his mother not to send him to school and was well on his way to immortality and fortune at the age of thirteen, would be referred today for psychological counseling; Thomas Edison would find himself in Special Ed until his peculiar genius had been sufficiently tamed.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*

“provides American business with the only reliable domestic market in the world.

Schools train individuals to respond as a mass. Boys and girls are drilled in being bored, frightened, envious, emotionally needy, generally incomplete. A successful mass production economy requires such a clientele. A small business, small farm economy like that of the Amish requires individual competence, thoughtfulness, compassion, and universal participation; our own requires a managed mass of leveled, spiritless, anxious, familyless, friendless, godless, and obedient people who believe the difference between Cheers and Seinfeld is a subject worth arguing about.”

— John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling*